



CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM(CBCS) IN INDIA: A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

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ABSTRACT

The fact that education is a significant contributor in a nation's development can't be denied. The different educational institutions of the country are committed to prepare the students as major assets to the economy. These institutions are facing unprecedented changes like changes in the curriculum, teaching methods and examination pattern so as to keep pace with the global education system. Further the reason behind these changes is the inability of the current education practices to cater to the needs of the global education pattern and its failure to integrate theory with the practice. The students are overpowered with the theoretical concepts but fail to develop the skills for employment. Therefore, efforts have been made by the UGC and other agencies for the overhauling of the current education system. One of the significant reforms in the higher education is implementing CBCS at both undergraduate and post graduate levels to provide for a learner-centric education system. Till now, many of educational institutions followed the traditional system of examination which did not allow for flexibility to the learners to opt for any subject of their choice from other disciplines also. The CBCS is a dynamic approach of evaluation system to help the pupils to learn at their own pace and satisfy their creative urges by opting the subjects apart from their main stream. The advantages of CBCS are manifold as compared to its disadvantages.

KEY WORDS: Choice based credit system, CBCS.

THE BACKGROUND:

Indian education system has undergone through a series of sudden and unexpected expansion during the past decades. It has led to a drastic increase in the population of learners. Furthermore, it has led to tremendous growth of educational institutions and rise in level of the public funding. The mushrooming growth of these institutions which are primarily teacher-centered gave rise to a number of problems like lack of quality teachers, faulty techniques of evaluation, deteriorating standards of education, inability to prepare students for practical life etc. This made the apex bodies of higher education to bring about qualitative reforms in education marked by initiatives like revision of curricula, introduction of choice based credit system, focus on development of quality content etc. Introduction and Implementation of CBCS in higher education is one of remarkable steps towards bringing quality reforms in the existing educational practices.

CBCS is a dynamic method of evaluation in which a student can opt a particular course of his choice and earn credits in other subjects. There is also a provision of completion of a course in two institutions i.e. half through the institution of enrichment and half in any specialized institution. According to report by the Times of India, (Gujarat-education.gov.in) Challenges of Higher Education (2010) can be avoided by interdisciplinary curriculum. The gap between liberal and professional education has to be bridged. Horizontal and vertical mobility of students has to be promoted. It is a reform in education which maximizes student participation and provides a uniform method of evaluating the student's overall achievement.

OBJECTIVES OF CBCS:

- To devise a system of higher education system which aims to satisfy the needs of different types of learners
- To develop a curriculum to provide for student-centered approach of teaching-learning.
- To bring qualitative changes in the current examination pattern.
- To equip the students of higher education with higher order mental abilities and prepare them for the challenges of future life.

Key Features of CBCS:

- Advocates the principle of self-pacing where every student can learn at his/her own speed.
- Provides an interdisciplinary approach to maximize the student-learning.
- Provides a homogenous system of evaluation for all central, state and other recognized universities throughout the country.
- Offers Core, Elective and Foundation as three main courses.
- Includes non-credit courses which are evaluated as 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory'. These do not have any credits while calculating grade points.

- Enhances vocational skills among the students by providing diverse courses.
- Evaluates core, elective and foundation courses to provide accurate assessment of the performance.
- Provides for the easy transfer of credits to migrating students.
- Offers the system of grading which reduces the fear of failure among the students.
- Enables the students to become self-confident and self-reliant.
- Makes mobility of students easier in colleges, universities in India and abroad.

Courses Offered under CBCS:

- Core Course:** It is compulsorily studied by the students as an essential requirement.
- Elective Course:** It refers to course that has to be selected from the available courses and is very specific in nature.
- Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) Course:** These are derived from the core subjects and interdisciplinary courses may be offered by the University.
- Dissertation/Project:** It aims at imparting practical and additional knowledge to the learners and he is supervised by the teacher or concerned expert.
- Generic Elective (GE) Course:** These are selected from a discipline which is different from the main discipline to provide extra support and enriching the knowledge base.
- Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC):** They are of two types:
 - AE Compulsory Course:** They aim at enhancing the existing knowledge of the learners. They are mandatory for all disciplines i.e. (i) Environmental Science, (ii) English/MIL Communication.
 - AE Elective Course:** The purpose is to nurture skills and values among the learners. For instance, Project work or Dissertation may be offered and should have 6 credits. It can be assigned in place of a DSE course.

Components of CBCS:

The major components of CBCS have been enumerated as under:

- Semesters:** The learners are evaluated semester wise. Every semester has academic work of 15–18 weeks duration and will be equivalent to 90 teaching days.
- Credit system:** Every course has been designed for certain credits. A student earns credits after passing that specific course. If he has passed only one course in a semester, he will not have to repeat that course in the next semester.

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- **Credit transfer:** In case the student is unable to adapt to the academic burden or suffers from any physical ailment, he has the flexibility to study few courses and to earn the related credits. Further, the remaining credits can be substantiated in the next semester.
- **Continuous and Comprehensive assessment:** It will not only done by the teacher but the student himself can perform his evaluation.
- **Counting of Credits in Credit System:** It is as follows:
 - a) 01 credit per semester = 01 hour of teaching (including both lecture (L) or tutorial (T) or two hours of practical work/field work (P) per week).
 - b) Total credits earned by student for each semester = L+T+P
 - c) A course of study can have only L component or only T or P component or combination of any two or all the three components.
- **Complying the Global Grading System:** Majority of the institutions offering higher education in India have adopted this new system if evaluation. Even the other countries like Australia, USA and Japan have adopted this system in one or the other way.

UGC Guidelines for Grading under CBCS:

University Grants Commission has devised a 10-point system of grading in CBCS to assign grades given below:

S. No.	Letter Grade	Corresponding Remarks	Corresponding Grade Point
1	O	Outstanding	10
2	A+	Excellent	9
3	A	Very Good	8
4	B+	Good	7
5	B	Above Average	6
6	C	Average	5
7	P	Pass	4
8	F	Fail	0
9	Ab	Absent	0

Pros/Merits of CBCS:

- **Learner-centered in nature:** It provides an opportunity to the students to select subjects according to their aptitudes, abilities and interests to meet their expectations.
- **Implementation of interdisciplinary approach:** It provides the integration of concepts, principles and ideas from different disciplines for solving the problems efficiently.
- **Enables student's mobility:** It encourages the mobility of students from institutions within the India to other countries enabling the transfer of credits smoothly.
- **Maintains the Standard of higher education:** It is able to meet the aspirations of the students who opt for higher education across the country by setting benchmarks.
- **Qualitative Improvement in education:** It aims at providing detailed knowledge of different subjects to the learners by utilizing the best available resources (both physical and human). Thus, it works to meet the educational standards and maintains the quality of education.
- **Emphasizes Teacher Competence:** It ensures that the teachers imparting education in various courses are well-equipped in terms of their mastery of content, communication skills, ICT competencies, research and teaching aptitude. There is a paradigm shift in the teacher's role from knowledge deliverer to that of a friend, philosopher and guide.
- **Provision of Continuous and Comprehensive Assessment:** It forms an essential component of CBCS. The assessment is uniformly done by the teacher at equal intervals of time and by using a variety of means like objective and subjective techniques. There is provision of feedback also which aims for improvement at every step of teaching-learning.
- **Grading System:** A system of grading based on the numerical scores is employed which reduces the psychological stress of the students. It offers a range of grades to accommodate the majority of the students and help them to overcome the fear of failure.

Cons/Demerits of CBCS:

- **Too many choices are misleading:** Providing excessive choices among the

different subjects may not be advantageous because the students are confused while opting for any subject or course. Also they may not be able to make appropriate choice according to their interests, abilities and aptitudes.

- **Lack of knowledge about Expertise of Teachers and resources:** If the students do not possess the adequate knowledge about the teaching faculty and availability of the resources required, he might be at a great loss leading to the wastage of his precious time and labour.
- **Likelihood of Missing better opportunity:** It might be that the students miss the better options available to him by choosing a particular subject. He may have to repent in future for making a wrong selection.
- **May prove Burdensome:** It may lead to extra burden on the physical and human resources of the institutions and they may not be able to fulfill the objectives of the particular course and meet the expectations of the students.
- **Problem in Managing Time:** The students opting for variety of subjects may find it difficult to do justice with all the subjects. The skill of time-management needs to practices by them.
- **Lack of Awareness:** After implementing any new change in education, it very essential to make the students and teachers aware about it. Lack of awareness will hamper the successful implementation of CBCS.
- **Uneconomic:** It is uneconomic in terms of time, energy/labour and money required for its execution. This indirectly puts burden on institutions which in turn leads to hike in student fees.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CBCS SYSTEM IN INDIA:

For successful implementation of CBCS in Indian context, the following suggestions may prove fruitful:

- Awareness should be created among the students and teachers by organizing seminars, conferences, workshops etc.
- Teachers training and skill development should be given importance.
- Both Percentage and grading system should be provided under CBCS.
- Guidance and counseling sessions should be conducted for students and teachers within the respective institutions.
- Institutions should be given freedom in designing the curriculum for a particular course.
- Financial assistance should be made available to the institutions implementing CBCS.
- Easy transfer of credits should be ensured within the country and in foreign universities.
- Norms for student mobility under CBCS should be well-stated and followed uniformly.

SUMMING UP:

Education is a significant contributor in the development of a nation. Higher education has the potential of igniting the young mind and make use of their creative abilities for the growth and prosperity of a nation. Evaluation plays a significant role in higher education as it provides a scope for the qualitative improvement. CBCS as a new trend in evaluation has been successful in developing higher order cognitive abilities among the learners which results into maximization of their creativity and innovation in education system. It is evident from researches also that CBCS provides for development of the balanced personality among the learning by providing them full freedom to choose the subjects, learn at their own pace, and provide feedback for improvement of course. The advantages of CBCS are manifold as discussed above but there are certain shortcomings also. But overcoming the cons would definitely help in the successful implementation of this system throughout the country. Sincere efforts are expected from the administrators, teachers, students and other stakeholders for its smooth execution. Lastly, it should be appreciated and encouraged as a great effort to maintain "Unity in Diversity" in the country.

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